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COMMISSION'S CONTRIBUTION AND FOLLOW-UP TO THE UNITED NATIONS GLOBAL PROGRAMMES AND TO THE ORGANIZATION'S PROGRAMMES DESIGNED TO ASSIST DEVELOPING COUNTRIES OF OTHER REGIONS

Note by the Executive Secretary

1. The present note provides a short account of the efforts to increase the outreach of ECE and intensify its contribution to the global programmes of the United Nations. Regular consultations and response to the different reporting requirements to service the global United Nations intergovernmental bodies have been considerably increased, which has resulted in greater visibility for the ECE work programme and results achieved. The ECE coordinating role with other regional commissions has provided an opportunity to strengthen interaction and jointly agreed positions in global and other United Nations meetings.

2. The relationship between the regional commissions and the global entities of the United Nations system will be discussed at the Senior Officials meeting convened by the Secretary General on 21-22 February 1995. The aim of the meeting is to enhance effectiveness and reinforce management in the economic and social sectors of the Organization in revitalizing the regional commissions to increase their responsiveness to national priorities, and adapting their role and contribution to changing realities at both the global and regional levels.

3. His objective is to refocus and streamline the work of the commissions to become centres of excellence in their respective regions, as well as catalysts for more coherent regional strategies and active forces for enhanced regional cooperation and integration.

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4. The Secretary-General is also concerned to strengthen linkages between the commissions and the economic departments and programmes at Headquarters, so that opportunities that exist for regional approaches and solutions to development problems are fully exploited, and regional capacities are mobilized in pursuing global development.

5. In the background document prepared by the regional commissions they emphasise their ability to address problems of specific concern to member States of their region, their multidisciplinary structure, their capacity to take initiatives which could not be successfully achieved at the global level, their rapid adaptation to changing needs in a region as they have an important intergovernmental mechanism which monitors closely their programme of work. The document also emphasizes that most of the issues have global and regional components and that greater attention should be given at the global level to delineate issues which call for a global consensus from those which call for regional action.

I. GLOBAL PROGRAMMES

A. International Conference on Population and Development

6. At the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), held in Cairo in September 1994, a two-member ECE delegation headed by the Executive Secretary addressed the plenary, placing emphasis on population trends and issues in Europe and North America and public policy responses to current and future population developments. The following major themes, which are relevant for the region, were covered in the presentation: (a) sub-replacement fertility, family change and contraception; (b) population ageing, older people and health; (c) international migration and foreign population; and (d) assistance to countries with economies in transition.

7. During the Conference, the Executive Secretary had a number of meetings, including one with representatives of countries in transition and one with representatives of OECD countries. The two meetings considered, respectively, how countries in transition could be assisted by ECE and other regional and international organizations with the follow-up to the Conference and how the donor countries might wish to plan for future cooperation with countries in transition. A meeting was also held with representatives of the Council of Europe to discuss future coordination of follow-up activities to be supported by the two organizations.

8. Prior to the Cairo Conference the ECE Population Activities Unit attended the Consultative Meeting of Countries with Economies in Transition on the International Conference on Population and Development (Budapest, 19-20 July 1994), which was convened by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and hosted by the Government of Hungary. The Meeting invited UNFPA and ECE to collaborate actively with the delegations of countries in transition during the Cairo Conference and assist them in ways deemed appropriate by the delegations. The Population Activities Unit helped the coordinator of the delegations of countries in transition draft a document entitled "Immediate follow-up to the ICPD in countries with economies in transition: October 1994 - March 1995". The document was considered and adopted by the representatives of countries in transition on the last day of the Conference.

9. The regional commissions have been invited by the ICPD Programme of Action to participate actively, within their mandates, in the follow-up to the Conference at the regional level. In addition, the Programme of Action called on the international community to provide countries in transition with assistance to their population and development activities in view of the difficult economic and social conditions they currently face. In response to these recommendations ECE has prepared a document "Population trends and population-related issues in countries in transition: the need for international assistance", which is currently being reviewed by some 40 population experts in the region before being finalized. In addition, ECE has appointed a regional adviser for population and development for a six-month period who will assist with the implementation of the transition countries' immediate post-Cairo follow-up plan.

10. ECE also coordinated the formulation of a joint response from the regional commissions to the Director of the Population Division, Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis (DESIPA), on the role of the United Nations Population Commission in the implementation of the Programme of Action. The regional commissions were of the view that the implementation should be coordinated (a) by the Population Commission, which should be strengthened accordingly, and (b) with the implementation of the final documents of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women.

B. World Summit for Social Development

11. The General Assembly, in resolution 47/92, requested the regional commissions to contribute to the World Summit for Social Development by emphasizing the social situation in their respective regions. The joint contribution of all five regional commissions covering the major thematic clusters of the Summit i.e. poverty, employment and social integration, was submitted to the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the Summit. The ECE contribution centred on the labour market, labour-related relative poverty and population trends, with the emphasis on social integration of vulnerable population groups, particularly the ageing, migrants and disabled persons.

12. The regional commissions, including ECE, monitored closely the preparatory process in order to make sure that problems identified within each region, as well as the role of the regional commissions, are reflected in the draft Declaration and draft Programme of Action being considered by the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit for Social Development. The ECE concern was to emphasize the interrelationship between major economic and social issues and to seek support for countries with economies in transition which are undergoing fundamental political, economic and social transformations, and therefore require the support of the international community.

13. ECE has also contributed to the interagency report on poverty prepared by the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) which will be circulated for information during the Summit.

14. The ECE publication on Rehabilitation Engineering (ECE/ENG.AUT/55, sales No.94.II.E.17), one of ECE's contributions to the Summit, will be exhibited at

the NGO Forum 95 since the United Nations is not organizing a special exhibit of the publications prepared for the Summit.

15. Taking into account the new population trends and representing the only region with a predominant ageing population, ECE contributed to the preparatory process by convening the Workshop on Population Ageing in Europe and North America: a Message to the World Summit for Social Development, at Geneva on 13 and 14 February 1995.

16. The Workshop was organized jointly by ECE and the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), with financial support from UNFPA. The other United Nations bodies and agencies, in particular the World Health Organization (WHO), contributed to the Workshop.

17. The purpose of the Workshop was to consider policy responses to population ageing in Europe and North America. Particular emphasis was placed on the main themes of the World Summit - poverty, employment and social integration. Figuring prominently on the agenda were an analysis of current and future trends in population ageing in the ECE region, including the subregional variations, public and private responses related to the problem, income security schemes and participation of older persons in the economy and in society. The report and messages emanating from the Workshop will be widely circulated during the Social Summit.

18. ECE will be represented at the Summit in Copenhagen from 6 to 12 March 1995. The conference will provide an opportunity to present the relevant work of ECE and to explore possible ways and means to contribute concretely to the follow-up activities envisaged by the United Nations system, particularly in the field of population and statistics, as well as to secure interface between economic and social issues.

19. ECE will also participate in the NGO Forum and will make a presentation at the workshop organized by the International Council of Social Welfare (ICSW) on the current macroeconomic trends within the ECE region and possible scenarios for the future, population trends, and the major recommendations emanating from the ECE High-level Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Fourth World Conference on Women. The presentation will focus on the relationship between economic and social development in central and eastern Europe and the role of NGOs.

C. Fourth World Conference on Women

20. The ECE High-level Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Fourth World Conference on Women took place at Vienna from 17 to 21 October 1994. It was the first intergovernmental meeting on women ever held at a high-level in the region covered by the Economic Commission for Europe. More than 1,200 people participated as follows: ECE member States: 348 participants, representing 45 countries; 26 participants, representing 11 observer States; 85 participants, representing 25 bodies and specialized agencies of the United Nations; 38 participants, representing 8 international organizations; 272 participants representing 75 NGOs with consultative status and 485 participants representing 224 NGOs without consultative status.

21. The Meeting was chaired by Ms. J. Dohnal, Austrian Minister for Women's Affairs. The Vice-Chairpersons of the Meeting were: Ms. Miet Smet, Minister

of Employment and Labour of Belgium; Ms. Elisabeth Rehn, Minister for Defence and for Equality Affairs of Finland; Ms. Sheila Finestone, Secretary of State for the Status of Women of Canada, Ms. Hildegard Puwak, State Secretary at the Council for Coordination, Strategy and Economic Reform of Romania; and Mr. A.M. Panov, Deputy Minister for Social Protect of Population of the Russian Federation. Mr. Ireneusz Matela (Poland) was Rapporteur. Ms. Irene Freudenschuss-Reichl, Austria, was Moderator of the Open-ended Drafting Group that negotiated the Platform for Action.

22. The Meeting was addressed by 21 government ministers and other eminent persons heading their respective delegation. Ms. G. Mongella, Secretary-General of the Fourth World Conference on Women, made a statement at the opening session of the Meeting, and Queen Fabiola of Belgium, member of the Advisory Council established by the Secretary General for the Conference, addressed the Meeting as a Special Guest.

23. The Meeting had before it six substantive reports prepared by the ECE secretariat, namely: Review and appraisal of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies on Equality, Development and Peace (E/ECE/RW/HLM/1); Trends in women's role in the economy (E/ECE/RW/HlM/2); Demographic and statistical trends and issues (E/ECE/RW/HLM/3); Women's access to employment and entrepreneurship (E/ECE/RW/HLM/4); Role of women in the transition processes (E/ECE/RW/HLM/5); and Women in public life and governance (E/ECE/RW/HLM/6).

24. A draft of the Platform for Action was also before the Conference. On the basis of a preliminary version prepared by the secretariat, the draft was further elaborated during an expert group meeting which took place at Geneva on 23 and 24 June 1994 and, subsequently, negotiations were initiated during an intergovernmental meeting which was held at Geneva on 26-27 September 1994.

25. More than 1,700 participants took part in a regional Non-Governmental Forum organized by the ECE/NGO Working Group and held from 13-15 October at the Vienna International Centre and other locations in Vienna. The Forum's conclusions were presented at the opening session of the Meeting by the President of the ECE/NGO Working Group, and a report was issued during the Meeting. Furthermore, the Secretariat of the Fourth World Conference on Women organized a Youth Consultation which took place from 13 to 16 October, gathering together 20 NGOs.

26. Of the 25 United Nations bodies and specialized agencies participating in the Meeting, 15 made statements under agenda items falling within their respective sphere of competence. Four of them organized events for the press, NGOs or delegations during the Meeting.

27. Many of the participating agencies are launching new programmes for the advancement of women in countries in transition. All of them are committed to the preparatory process for Beijing as well as playing a role in implementing the recommendations to be adopted there.

28. The draft Platform for Action was negotiated in an open-ended drafting group, which held sessions in parallel to the plenary sessions. The text was adopted by consensus at the final session of the Meeting.

29. The document contains a Preambular Declaration, a statement of mission and describes the regional framework of action. Subsequently, it outlines

seven "critical areas of concern", which are matched by seven strategic objectives contained in part IV, which constitutes the action-oriented part of the document. The strategic objectives relate to achieving and protecting the full realization of all women's human rights; eradication of women's poverty; recognition of women's full contribution to their national economies and to sustainable development; equal treatment between women and men workers and the harmonization of work and family responsibilities; full participation of women in public life; gender specific statistical systems and gender research and intra- and interregional solidarity and cooperation for the empowerment of women.

30. Part V of the document deals with the means of implementation and follow-up and contains a section on "The regional role of the United Nations system". It underlines that the system should play a significant role in the implementation and monitoring of the strategic objectives, in close cooperation with other global and regional organizations. This should be done by organizing debates and exchange of experiences on specific aspects of such objectives and by adopting an integrated approach, preferably through joint programming of specific activities. Accordingly, the document delineates five areas for the follow-up to the Regional Platform for Action by the United Nations system, focusing on: (a) intergovernmental policy debates; (b) action by the regional Offices of the specialized United Nations bodies and agencies; (c) the role of ECE; (d) technical assistance and operational activities; (e) the interface between NGOs, the United Nations system and Governments in countries in transition.

31. In order to play its role in the implementation of, and follow-up to, the regional Platform for Action, ECE is requested to mainstream women's issues and gender perspective within its existing mandate and activities, inter alia, statistics and economic analysis. The establishment of mechanisms and processes to ensure such implementation and follow-up could lead to the preparation of an Action Plan to be prepared immediately after the Fourth World Conference at Beijing in consultation with other institutions active in the region. The Action Plan could be implemented during the 1996-1997 biennium.

32. It should be recalled that, since the Commission had not dealt with women-related issues in the past, the secretariat had to rely on external funding and outside expertise to prepare the High-level Regional Preparatory Meeting.

33. Part VI of the document concerns the mobilization of financial resources for implementing the strategic objectives. It proposes, inter alia, to establish goals for resource mobilization, focusing on the fundamental elements of what might constitute an effective core programme for women's advancement, while in no way undermining the importance of mainstreaming women-related issues. In this respect, the Meeting requests that "this issue be put on the agenda of the March 1995 session of the Commission on the Status of Women, and urges the General Assembly to request that, within existing resources, the Secretary-General's report to that session on the state of the art in this field and on the feasibility of convening an Expert Group Meeting on this issue, consisting of government and other experts and relevant United Nations agencies".

34. At present, the secretariat is ensuring the immediate follow-up to the Meeting in response to requests. It stands ready to ensure a follow-up on a more permanent basis as long as the necessary means and appropriate mechanisms are provided.

35. The Platform for Action adopted at Vienna has enabled the Commission to continue its contribution to the preparatory process for the Fourth World Conference in cooperation with member States, the Commission for the Status of Women, the Council of Europe and the NGO community.

D. United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II)

36. The ECE Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) (Istanbul, 13-14 June 1996) was held at Geneva on 12 September 1994. The Meeting considered the ECE contribution to the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements and reviewed the draft paper "Towards sustainable human settlements development in the ECE region", which had been prepared by Mr. M. Lujanen (Finland) at the request of the Bureau of the ECE Committee on Human Settlements.

37. The Meeting concluded that the ECE contribution to Habitat II should make full use of the work and capacity of its different relevant subsidiary bodies. The Meeting further recommended that a coordination group should be established within the secretariat to provide a cross-sectoral review of the ECE contribution to the Conference in general and the document "Towards sustainable human settlements development in the ECE region" in particular. The coordinating group had its first meeting on 2 February 1995.

38. The Committee on Human Settlements agreed to establish a Task Force to assist the Committee in carrying out the preparatory work. The Committee's Bureau at its meeting in December 1995 agreed on the terms of reference of the Task Force and nominated Mr. L. Karlsberg (Sweden) a Chairman of the Task Force. A workshop to define the scope of activities of the Task Force will be held in Istanbul (Turkey) from 9 to 10 March 1995.

39. As requested by the Commission in decision I (49) related to ECE preparations for Habitat II, a separate document has been submitted to the Commission (E/ECE/1318).

E. ECE contribution to the functional commissions and expert meetings of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

40. ECE intensified its cooperation with the functional commissions and expert meetings of ECOSOC, such as the Commission on Sustainable Development, Statistical Commission, Population Commission, Commission on Science and Technology for Development, Commission on the Status of Women, Commission for Social Development, Expert Meeting on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and many other United Nations intergovernmental bodies.

41. Thus, for example, the documentation and recommendations for action prepared by the secretariat for the preparatory process of the third session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) included such issues as combating poverty; changing consumption patterns; information for decision making, integrating environment and development in decision making; the role of major groups; demographic dynamics; consultative mechanisms on

information exchange systems; transfer of technology, cooperation and capacity building; biotechnology; agriculture and rural development; and international legal instruments and mechanisms.

42. With these contributions, it is expected that the third session of CSD would give further momentum to the promotion of regional cooperation for capacity building, the integration of environmental concerns into development policies, and transboundary issues related to sustainable development.

43. Similar efforts were made to increase the ECE contribution to the related meetings of the United Nations and specialized agencies. It is expected that the additional efforts to present ECE activities through reporting will strengthen the outreach of ECE work results and lead to further cooperative arrangements, including joint programming of assistance to economies in transition.

II. ASSISTANCE TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES OF OTHER REGIONS

44. The consultative process with other regional commissions, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Department for Development Services and Management Support (DDSMS) has been continued in order to identify resources for translating some of the ECE ongoing programmes into assistance to developing countries of other regions.

A. Trade Facilitation

45. The ECE Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures has over the years developed into a unique forum for international cooperation in trade facilitation. In particular, it provides a platform for interregional discussions on the matter. Representatives from more than 40 countries participate in the sessions of the Working Party. In order better to coordinate activities on the development and implementation of UN/EDIFACT the Working Party has appointed regional EDIFACT rapporteurs for Pan America, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Australia/New Zealand, Africa and Asia. The rapporteurs have in turn established regional EDIFACT boards to support their work.

46. The fact that out of six regional EDIFACT boards, three are established in countries outside the ECE region (Asian EDIFACT Board, African EDIFACT Board and Australia/New Zealand EDIFACT Board), and that one includes non-ECE as well as ECE member countries (Pan American EDIFACT Board), emphasizes the importance of these regions in the collaborative effort to develop UN/EDIFACT and modern trade facilitation techniques. Regions outside Europe comprise the following countries:

(a) Asian EDIFACT Board: China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. The Taiwan Province of China is an associate member of the Board, while Mongolia and Hong Kong are observers;

(b) African EDIFACT Board: Botswana, Gabon, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe;

(c) Australia/New Zealand EDIFACT Board: Australia and New Zealand;

(d) Pan American EDIFACT Board: Brazil, Canada, Chile and the United States. Colombia participates as an associate member.

47. Participation in the activities of the regional EDIFACT boards, which contribute to the development of UN/EDIFACT standards between sessions, has expanded considerably. The global nature of the work has been recognized by the Bureau of the Working Party, and in order better to represent the interests of those countries that are not members of ECE, the Bureau has appointed a special representative (Japan).

48. A member of the secretariat participated in the Asian EDIFACT Board Meeting in Malaysia in June 1994 and was able to advise Governments on trade facilitation recommendations. In addition, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) is pursuing an active trade facilitation programme in the Asian region.

49. Close cooperation has been maintained between ECE and UNCTAD since the creation of FALPRO (Special Programme on Trade Facilitation), now called SPTE (Special Programme on Trade Efficiency), allowing the two organizations to benefit from their combined resources. The results of ECE work are disseminated in developing countries that are not members of ECE through technical cooperation activities. One event of particular importance was the United Nations World Summit on Trade Efficiency, held at Columbus, Ohio, in October 1994. Representatives from ECE attended the symposium and one horizontal and one vertical session dealing with trade facilitation were held. In a cooperative effort with UNCTAD/SPTE, a Compendium on Trade Facilitation Recommendations was developed.

B. Statistics

50. Indirectly, ECE work in statistics contributes to the statistical work of other regional commissions. A case in point is the ECE decision on the fundamental principles of official statistics, which were widely discussed and commented in all regions. They have now been adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission.

51. In the field of statistics, ECE continues to provide assistance to developing countries through the transfer of results and know-how of the joint ECE/UNDP Statistical Computing Project Phase 2 (SCP-2). SCP 2 final products are disseminated to the other regional commissions and developing countries in all regions of the world.

52. In its review of the international statistical system, the United Nations Statistical Commission has drawn heavily upon work already undertaken in the ECE region and in particular by the Conference of European Statisticians (CES).

53. In order better to coordinate the work of international agencies in statistics, the Statistical Commission is considering adopting the CES procedure for the integrated presentation of statistical work programmes of all international organizations active in the region. Experience in the ECE region indicates that greater efficiency can be achieved and duplication eliminated by the procedures adopted by ECE.

54. The Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, which were adopted by the Economic Commission for Europe have been accepted by the United Nations Statistical Commission and distributed to all regions of the world.

C. Environment

55. Agenda 21 and other decisions adopted at UNCED expressed the need to develop a more systematic approach in exchanging experience and technical know-how among countries and regions. The pioneering work of ECE and its conventions provide concepts and approaches that could be of assistance to other regions through increased interaction with the Commission for Sustainable Development to which regional plans for action are being submitted. The representatives of developing and donor countries have shown interest in the Environment for Europe process and its ministerial conferences.

56. An example of quite concrete action is the cooperation with the International Centre for Public Enterprises (ICPE) to formulate an initial programme on integrated coastal management in the Mediterranean region.

D. Energy

57. The experience of the ECE programme on Energy Efficiency 2000 resulted in the proposal to extend the work to other regions according to the preliminary proposal elaborated by ECE under the title Global Energy Efficiency 21, which was formally reviewed by ECA, ESCAP and ESCWA. All the regional commissions are supposed to develop joint programmes in the field of natural resources and energy with DDSMS. The ECE Committee on Energy at its fourth session reiterated its request to convene the Steering Committee of the Global Energy Efficiency 21 in cooperation with DDSMS so as to develop a comprehensive programme with all necessary regional modifications, which could be submitted for funding to bilateral and multilateral financial institutions. Consultations are in progress with DDSMS to secure the programme support costs for convening the Steering Committee and further develop the programmes.

58. Similar consultations are carried out to secure exchange of experience and develop interregional cooperation in the field of energy resources such as coal, natural gas and renewable sources of energy.

E. Transport

59. Most legal instruments on transport promoted by ECE are open to accession by United Nations Member States. They refer to transport infrastructure, facilitation of transport operations and transport regulations in inland transport. Three worldwide conventions have contributed to the application of a common system of road signs, signals and markings, safety requirements for motor vehicles and improvement of road traffic safety. ECE supports the work of ECOSOC related to the transport of dangerous goods, which enables countries of other regions to develop national legislation and regional agreements.

60. Advisory services were provided to the ECO/ESCAP subregional Seminar on Transport Facilitation measures, held at Teheran from 15 to 17 November 1994 for ECO member states namely Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

F. Industry

61. Many of the studies made in the industry and technology field, such as the "Global Review of the Iron and Steel Industry" and the study of chemical legislation in the countries of the ECE region, address questions of interest also to developing countries. The recommendation on metrology in testing, adopted by the Commission at its forty-ninth session in 1994 as decision H (49), provides information about state of the art practices and procedures which if adhered to will facilitate exports from developing countries to the ECE region. The recently issued publication "ECE Inventory of Safety Guidelines in Biotechnology" contains information of interest to those developing countries which conduct research, development and production activities in the field of biotechnology as well as export and/or import products produced with the use of biotechnological methods.

G. Agriculture and Timber

62. ECE cooperates with the FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission through its Working Party on Standardization of Perishable Produce and Quality Development. In addition, for countries which comply with ECE standards, it facilitates access of their products on ECE markets. The results of the work of the Timber Committee are used by the FAO European Forestry Commission. The criteria on sustainable forest management are most relevant for international trade in timber. The activities of the joint FAO/ECE/ILO Committee on forest technology made it possible to make available the experience of developed countries to experts in other regions.